

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT – CROSS PARTY GROUP ON GAELIC

Minute of the meeting of the Cross Party Group on Gaelic, held in the Scottish Parliament Building, Holyrood, Edinburgh on Thursday 28th June 2012 at 5pm. This was the Group's Annual General Meeting.

Present: *Dave Thompson MSP, (Convener); Angus MacDonald MSP; John Finnie MSP; Jamie McGrigor MSP; Donald MacNeill, (Secretary); DJ MacIntyre (CLÌ Gàidhlig); Dòmhnall Caimbeul (MG Alba); Iain Aonghas MacAoidh (Bòrd na Gàidhlig); Dòmhnall Mac'Illehoire (Stòrlann); Alasdair MacFhionghuin (Bòrd na Gàidhlig) ; Steven MacIomhair (Bòrd na Gàidhlig); Kirsteen Currie (Scottish Parliament); Carole Henderson; Ciorstaidh NicDhòmhnaill (Alba Aosmhor); Coinneach Combe (Comunn na Gàidhlig – simultaneous interpretation)*

1. Welcome & Apologies

Apologies had been received from: Jean Urquhart MSP; Duncan MacNeil MSP; Kenneth Murray (The Highland Council); Ceitidh Mhòireach (Iomairt Ghàidhlig Dhùn Èidinn); Rosemary Ward (Comhairle nan Leabhraichean); Chris Deplano (Perth & Kinross Council).

2. Minutes of last meeting – 20th March 2011.

The Minutes of the meeting of 20th March were approved. Proposed by DJ MacIntyre and seconded by John Angus MacKay.

3. Matters Arising.

There were no 'matters arising' not covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

4. Appointment of Office Bearers.

This being the Group's AGM it was necessary to select office bearers for the 2011/12 Session.

Convener

Dave Thomson explained that while he had enjoyed undertaking the role of CPG Convener, and intended to attend meetings, he would be unable to continue in the role. He nominated Angus MacDonald for the Convener's position.

In accepting the nomination and the support of the Group into the position Angus MacDonald thanked Mr Thomson for his support and his contribution and undertook to give the same commitment to the post. He said it was good to be selected to the position on the day the new National Plan for Gaelic was launched.

Vice-Convener

Dave Thomson was nominated by Jamie McGrigor, seconded by John Finnie. Mr Thomson accepted the nomination and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected by the Group.

Secretary

Donald MacNeill was nominated by John Angus Mackay, seconded by John Finnie. Mr MacNeill accepted the nomination and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected by the Group.

This concluded the Appointment of Office Bearers.

5. Annual Report of CPG 2011/12

A draft Annual Report, completed within the required Parliamentary template had been completed and circulated.

This was approved by the meeting.

6. National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17

The new National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-17 ‘ Fàs is Feabhas’ had received its Ministerial launch in Edinburgh earlier in the day. John Angus Mackay, CEO of Bòrd na Gàidhlig made a presentation on the contents of the Plan. Among the points made were:

- Shorter Plan than first draft - as per consultation responses and views of Minister;
- Plan linked to Government’s overall priorities, but a tighter focus, and therefore of benefit to all the bodies who will help implement it;
- A ‘strategic Plan’ rather than a ‘work Plan’ - this will follow;
- Key priorities of *Home; Education; and Community*. Other things are important, but there’s a focus on these.
- Key aspiration, to maintain and grow the numbers of speakers, is to double intake into GME education in the lifetime of the Plan. Substantial, co-ordinated effort required to achieve this, from a wide number of fronts.
- Acknowledge the need for more teachers to achieve this.

In the discussion that followed the presentation, a number of points were raised:

- The Plan was generally welcomed;
- Some of the issues seemed to have remained unchanged, with little progress for quite some time - particularly in relation to teacher supply. The issue of remuneration ought to be considered.
- A question on the language achievement/fluency of children coming through GME system;
- A need for more to be done to ‘enthuse’ people about Gaelic; that The Highland Council was to reconsider the question of GME pupil/teacher ratios;
- that a career structure ought to be created to allow teachers to see career progression beyond GME ‘units’;
- whether more Local Authorities can be required to prepare Gaelic Language Plans (relating to the required growth in GME provision);

- that more ought to be done to encourage parents of GME pupils to learn the language;
- that a common definition of GME be developed to address the wide disparity of provision across Scotland, and that a quantitative audit of GME in schools be carried out.

These points and others were addressed by John Angus Mackay.

7. AOCB / Updates from Members.

There were no further updates.

8. Proposed dates of next meetings:

It was proposed by the Convener that the Group move to a timetable of 2 meetings in each year, with the opportunity remaining for 'ad hoc' meetings in the intervening periods should they be required.

This was supported by the Group.

It was agreed that the next meeting ought to be scheduled around the date of the 'BT Gaelic schools debate' finals, this has recently been the occasion of the Cross Party Group's annual reception. The 2012 date for the competition finals is Wednesday 28th November.